



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Testimony presented to the Environment Committee of

The Connecticut General Assembly

By the Connecticut Department of Agriculture

March 7, 2012

**S.B. 254 AN ACT RESTRICTING THE APPLICATION OF FERTILIZERS
THAT CONTAIN PHOSPHATE**

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture has some concerns about S.B. 254 as there could be confusion regarding the definition of an “established lawn” in the bill.

In Section 1. (a) of the bill an “established lawn” is defined as “...any area of ground that is covered with any species of grass for two or more growing seasons and that is customarily kept mowed.” In addition Section 1. (b) prohibits the application of fertilizer “...that contains phosphate to any lawn during the period beginning November fifteenth and ending April first of the following year.”

Phosphorus is needed by grasses immediately after germination and until a root system is established. Farmers use phosphorus at appropriate agronomic rates to stimulate growth. Connecticut farmers grow crops which can be classified as “grasses” under the bill such as orchard grass and timothy. Maize (corn) is in the same botanical family. These grasses are commonly grown for cattle feed, as hay is for horses and other livestock. These forages are extremely important to Connecticut agriculture. Grasses also include crops grown for grain and greenchop such as oats and millet which are presently grown in small quantities here in Connecticut.

It is important to note the availability of phosphate free organic fertilizers. There is a current movement toward organically produced crops and organically fertilized lawns and turf. While it is possible to produce traditional fertilizer that is free of phosphate, the agency is not aware of any certified organic fertilizer that is free of phosphate.

The second half of the month of March can be a critical time period for the application of fertilizer to hay land and turf farms and, depending on climatic conditions, some parts of the state may be prepping land for corn production. A prohibition on the use of phosphorus would be detrimental to crop production and ultimately detrimental to farmers.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department’s written testimony.